



Many of my patients don't feel the need to floss because, as they say "I don't get food trapped between my teeth".

Before I explain proper flossing technique, I would like to go ahead and disarm this excuse right now...

Floss MYTH: You must floss in order to clean out trapped food particles.

Wrong!

Flossing is not primarily about cleaning out trapped food particles. It *does* do that, and it *is* a beneficial aspect of flossing, but it's not the primary objective. So, even if you don't get food trapped between your teeth, you still need to floss.

Why? What is the primary objective of flossing?

ANSWER: Dental floss is designed to gently glide BELOW the gum-line to DISRUPT BACTERIAL ACTIVITY. That's right. You have millions of bacteria living between your teeth and below your gums that cause all kinds of damage to your teeth, your gums and even your jawbone. But wait, there's more...these bacteria aren't satisfied with infesting your teeth and gums and bone; they also enter your bloodstream and travel the circulatory system all the way to your heart and other vital organs.

This is why periodontal disease (the technical term we use to describe uncontrolled bacterial growth) is linked to major health problems like diabetes, heart disease, pulmonary disease and even cancer.

What does this mean for you?

NOT FLOSSING HAS SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES BEYOND BAD BREATH AND TOOTH LOSS - IT CAN THREATEN YOUR OVERALL HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE!

*Some studies indicate that flossing at least once daily can increase your lifespan by 6.4 years!*

Now that you know why it is so important to floss daily (at least once a day!) we can conscientiously explain the proper technique.

1. It all starts with using an adequate length of floss. 18 inches is a good amount, which can be easily measured by pulling a length of floss out of the container that extends

- down to your elbow.
2. Next, you will want to wrap both ends of the floss around your MIDDLE finger until you are at the point where you can pinch the remaining length of floss between your thumb and index finger - leaving you about 1-2 inches to “work with” (See illustration below - images 1 & 2). This process is important because it allows you to adeptly use the floss properly without injuring your gum.
  3. This brings us to the next step, which is to adapt the floss to each side of the tooth and move it up and down several times in order to disrupt the bacteria colonies growing in the hard to reach sub-gingival (below the gum-line) areas. To be clear, you will first need to slide the floss gently between the teeth (you may hear or feel a ‘snap’). Once the floss is between the teeth, you can then adapt the floss to the rear tooth (push back) and slide it up and down, and then adapt the floss to the forward tooth (pull forward) and then again, slide it up and down until you meet resistance from the gum itself. Once you feel this resistance (what I like to call “bottoming out”) then there is no need to push farther; it will only lead to floss cuts in the gum. However, you should slide the floss up and down in such a way that you “bottom out” every time (see illustration below - images 2 & 3).

Please reference the illustration below if the written instructions are hard to follow. HAPPY FLOSSING!

